DMAP Newsletter

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Drawing by Donald "Duck" Locascio, Jr.
Wildlife Forester

DMAP

How will Statewide Tagging affect DMAP / LADT?

Limits and Tagging

By David Moreland, Wildlife Division Administrator

At the February Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission meeting, Wildlife Division recommended adopting a season limit of three antlered bucks and three antlerless deer for the 2006-07 season. Along with this was the proposed requirement to have hunters document their harvest on a Harvest Tag Report Card and submit this information to the department at the end of the deer season. These recommendations are being made as the department prepares to initiate deer and turkey tagging through the point-of-sale license system. Deer tagging would begin with the 2007-08 deer season and turkey tagging would begin with the 2008 turkey season.

There will be no deer tags for the 2006-07 deer season. Hunters will simply pick up a Harvest Tag Report Card and have this on their person while hunting. When a hunter kills a deer, the hunter simply documents the kill on the card. Cards will be available from the department at all offices, from license vendors, and plans are being made to have a card inserted in the 2006-07 hunting pamphlet. At the end of the season hunters will either mail the cards to the department or file a report on the department web site. The 2006-07 season is preparing hunters for future seasons when the actual tagging and reporting systems are proposed to begin. The hunter response from the 2006-07 season will give the department staff insight into hunter compliance and will guide the department in the development of a reporting and validation program.

The three antlerless deer that hunters are permitted to harvest can be taken in most areas of the state during the entire deer season. However, there are exceptions. Hunters should continue to read the regulations to determine either-sex opportunity in the areas they hunt. Public lands will continue to operate under the either-sex day structure and hunters must document this harvest on their Harvest Tag Report Card. DMAP and LADT hunters will also document their harvest on the Harvest Tag Report Card in addition to documenting the harvest on the cooperator data sheets. The DMAP and LADT data sheets provide information on the physical condition of deer harvested on a specific site, while the Harvest Tag Report Card will provide information on the individual hunter.

The Louisiana Legislature is currently considering legislation to allow the sale of bonus deer tags. The bonus tags for does and bucks would be available to all hunters and provide hunters with additional harvest opportunity. The bonus doe tags will be of particular benefit to public land hunters who travel around and hunt the various WMA hunts. Only 1 bonus buck tag would be available to hunters who desire to purchase it. Since only 16% of the senior hunters and 15% of the licensed hunters (ages 16-59) harvest three or more deer, we believe this will not affect the goal of the antlered buck limit of reducing the harvest of young bucks. We believe most hunters who purchase this bonus buck tag will be targeting the older bucks.

Revenue generated from the bonus tag program will be used to pay the costs associated with deer and turkey tagging. Hunters who are exempt from paying license fees (under 16, lifetime license holders, over 65, etc.) will be issued deer and turkey tags at no cost, however, the transaction will cost the department seventy-five cents. This could equate to as much as $100,000 or more for these transactions. Hunters who purchase their licenses will pay the transaction cost at the time of purchase. It is believed that the bonus tag program will produce the revenue necessary to pay for both deer and turkey tagging and data collection. Without this source of revenue the department would have to take funding away from other department programs.

Note: The House did not pass the proposed bonus tag legislation. If the department is short of revenue and cannot afford deer and turkey tagging

for the 2007-08 seasons, it may have to make the decision not to initiate tagging transactions through point-of-sale. The department could simply continue with the deer limits without actual tags until funding can become available for the program.

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DEER RESEARCH/BIOLOGY

SOUTHEAST:

Southeast Deer Study Group Meeting

By Emile P. LeBlanc, DMAP Coordinator

The 29th Annual Meeting of the Southeast Deer Study Group was held in Baton Rouge February 26 – 28, 2006. The meeting coincided with Mardi Gras festivities around the state. Presenters came from as far away as Delaware and, based on observations and comments from registration through the banquet's Mardi Gras atmosphere, the meeting was an overwhelming success.

Thirty-seven (37) presentations were given to an audience ranging from deer experts to avid hunters from around the southeastern United States. Half of the papers were student papers from the various universities in the southeast as well as several from northern and midwestern universities. A brief review of several of the papers that might be of interest to our DMAP and LADT clubs is provided.

Survival Of Deer Fawns In Southern Illinois From Birth To 4½ Months:

One hundred and sixty-six (166) fawns were radio-collared to determine survival rates and sources of mortality. Survival rate during the study was 59% with most mortality due to predation. Coyotes were the most important predators. Habitat with irregular forest patches and more edge had lower fawn mortality.

Evaluation of Tooth Wear Aging Techniques using South Texas White-tailed Deer:

The "Severinghaus Tooth Wear Aging Technique" has been used as the standard to assign age classes to white-tailed deer. An assessment of this technique was made using 263 known-age mandibles (jaw bones) collected from 135 deer 2 years and older. Six (6) experienced agers had an overall accuracy of 48% for the exact age and 86% accuracy to $\pm$ 1 year. It also was found that accuracy decreased as mandible age increased. Additionally, 231 known-age live deer 2 years and older were aged by visual inspection using a modified version of the Severinghaus technique. Accuracy of aging of live deer was 71%. Another study is investigating computer assisted digital techniques to improve aging accuracy.

Ineffectiveness Of Roadside Warning Reflectors For Altering Deer Behavior Along Roadways:

Some states have spent millions on roadside reflector devices to alert deer and reduce deer/vehicle collisions. This study tested a popular roadside reflector that the manufacturer claims deters deer from attempting to cross roads by distributing light from the vehicle to the roadside corridor, thereby creating an optical warning fence to deer. The study tested the red, white, blue-green and amber reflectors. It recorded 1,370 behavioral responses to these reflectors during 90 observation nights and found these reflectors were ineffective.

Biased Fetal Sex Ratios In High Density Deer Herds:

White-tailed deer fetuses were collected from a high density herd located within a large (~640 acre) enclosure in Alabama. Male fetuses were more prevalent than females. This phenomenon

has been observed in other high density populations. Male-biased sex ratios could limit population growth in high density populations. Implications for quality buck management in high density herds may include increased mortality from fighting and decreased antler quality resulting from fighting related breakage.

Effects Of Different Site Prep Techniques On Available Deer Forage Plants:
A comparison of site preparation treatments on availability and quality of deer foods was conducted in southeastern Louisiana. Sites treated with prescribed *fire only* were compared to those treated with prescribed **fire and imazapyr (Arsenal)**. The 1st year following treatment, fire only sites were dominated by woody and vine species while the fire/imazapyr sites contained herbaceous vegetation, legumes, and blackberry. Three years after application, each treatment type contained similar amounts of vegetation, but the *fire only* sites were mostly yaupon while the **fire/imazapyr** sites were comprised of a variety of vines, forbs, and other woody species. This study demonstrated that careful use of certain herbicides can improve deer forage.

The Effects of Deer Browsing on Soybean Production:
This study was done in Delaware but also seems very pertinent to Louisiana. It highlighted several findings:

-The highest browsing activity was documented along field edges.

-Browsing was most intense out to about 20 yards from the forest edge.

-Highest browsing activity occurred during the first 3–4 weeks following emergence.

-Short-term protection from browsing had no effect on yield.

Information gathered from this study helped to formulate a recommendation that farmers should plant the entire bean crop at the same time to reduce overall browsing activity during the 3–4 week vulnerable period. This effectively reduces the time period that more desirable bean browse is available.

Can A Selective Buck Harvest Affect Free-ranging White-tailed Deer Antler Characteristics?:
Selective breeding experiments in deer enclosures have resulted in increased antler quality. An experiment was conducted to determine if intensive culling of bucks with inferior antlers would result in measurable antler quality in a free-ranging population in south Texas. It was determined that culling was ineffective. Possible explanations for observed results included yearling buck dispersal, adult buck movement, low harvest rates and low reproductive success.

Deer Habitat In The Ozark Mountains Of Arkansas (A 19-Year Study):
This study involved monitoring deer populations in 2 large enclosures (590 – 675 acres) to determine deer carrying capacity and the impacts of food plots on survival and productivity. Carrying capacity increased with food plots but populations remained fairly stable. The take home message was that food plots seemed beneficial only during years of low mast yields. Populations were limited by low fawn survival due to predation, disease parasites and other unknown factors.

Comparing Spotlight Deer Counts To Thermal Imaging Techniques:
Spotlight counts have been used for years as a tool to estimate deer abundance. This study compared deer detection rates between spotlights and thermal imagers and found that imagers detected 41.5% more deer than the spotlighting. This does not mean that spotlight counts are not useful as they can be used to estimate population trends if a good sampling design is applied.

Home Range And Fidelity of Adult Male Deer In South Texas:
This study monitored 96 deer of varied ages and used 16,696 location estimates. Young bucks had the largest ranges averaging 1,431 acres while the oldest buck had a home range averaging 981 acres. Oldest bucks showed the strongest fidelity to their home range and were “anchored” to 73% of their range, which was as small as 345 acres.

Space restriction does not allow a complete overview of all papers but if anyone is interested in obtaining a copy of the abstracts, they can contact me at: telephone: (225)765-2344
e-mail: eleblanc@wlf.louisiana.gov.

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Louisiana:

Deer Telemetry Study

By Scott Durham, Deer Program Manager and Michael Chamberlain, Ph.D., LSU School of Renewable Resourcse

White-tailed deer are an important economic and recreational resource across their entire range. In Louisiana and other southeastern states, increasing amounts of land are being managed under the guidelines of quality deer management. Because this management regime involves restricting harvest of younger age class bucks and increasing the harvest of females to lower herd density, substantial interest exists in understanding effects of quality deer management on population characteristics. Furthermore, harvest rates of deer in many populations are unknown, but this information would be helpful in refining management plans dedicated towards improving herd health and quality.

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and Louisiana State University have initiated a new deer telemetry project to begin in fall 2006. A. Wilbert's Sons, L.L.C. is the primary landowner and cooperator. They are providing technical, logistical, and housing support for the researchers. The project is titled: *Population characteristics of a white-tailed deer herd in a bottomland hardwood forest of south-central Louisiana*. This research should provide valuable information for Louisiana deer and land managers. The research will be directed by Michael J. Chamberlain, Ph.D., LSU School of Renewable Natural Resources.

The primary objectives of the study are to: 1) assess spatial use and movements of male and female white-tailed deer, 2) evaluate age and sex-specific harvest rates of white-tailed deer, and 3) evaluate survival and cause-specific mortality of male and female white-tailed deer.

This research will be conducted on approximately 40,000 acres of bottomland hardwood forest located west of Baton Rouge and east of the Atchafalaya Basin. The study area is currently leased to >30 private hunting clubs and, each club belongs to a cooperative that promotes quality deer management on the property.

Donations for research supplies are needed. Anyone or organization interested in contributing financially to the project should contact Scott Durham: LDWF, Deer Program Manager, P.O. Box 98000, Baton Rouge, LA 70898, telephone number- 225-765-2351. A fund held by the South Louisiana Quality Deer Management Association has been set up to accept the tax-deductible donations.

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Bluetongue Virus #1 Status Update

By Emile P. LeBlanc, DMAP Coordinator

In the past several years, our biological staff has been called upon to collect samples to be tested for a number of wildlife diseases. As a consequence, we are always on the lookout for anything that may be a health concern for our wildlife populations.

With the discovery of CWD outside of the confines of Colorado and Wyoming and the nationwide testing efforts, awareness has been raised among hunters and landowners to report sick animals. As a result of this increased awareness and reporting, a subtype (#1) of the bluetongue virus (BTV), which had not been previously documented in the continental United States, was confirmed from a sick deer in poor condition from one of our DMAP clubs in lower St. Mary Parish. Subsequently, the Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study (SCWDS) located in Athens, Georgia, launched a two-year sample collection effort to determine the extent of this "new" subtype of BTV.

Dr. Samantha Gibbs, DVM, Ph.D., with SCWDS and an assistant made two trips to Louisiana to assist our biological staff with sampling efforts across the southern portion of Louisiana to determine the extent this strain in south Louisiana. It also provided the opportunity to document the prevalence of the other subtypes of BTV and epizootic hemoragic disease (EHD).

Finding BTV #1 has led Dr. Lane Foil, an entomologist at LSU, to collect midge flies (no-see-ums),which are important transmission vectors for BTV and EHD, to see if it can be isolated in these little biting flies.

Blood samples from hunter-killed deer from the southern half of the state (below Alexandria) were collected during the Thanksgiving hunts and other opportunities. Blood tests determine if specific antibodies produced in response to each different strain of BTV are present. Results from this year's collections should determine the extent of sampling next season.

During the first season's sampling period, 418 blood samples were collected. One hundred and seventy-seven (177) (42%) were negative for BTV and EHD. EHD antibodies were found in 118 (28%) of the samples. One hundred and twenty-three (123) (29%) samples tested positive for BTV antibodies with further tests pending to determine the subtype. The presence of antibodies indicated that 58% of the deer sampled were exposed to BTV or EHD.

Mortality associated with BTV #1 in wild deer populations is unknown at this time. Even if the disease does not prove fatal to deer, it can affect their general overall health and productivity. It is known to have adverse effects on livestock, particularly sheep. Increased surveillance is required for any disease that has significant ramifications to livestock when wildlife are important vectors. We will update this article as more results become available.

Severity of BTV and EHD outbreaks varies from year to year. Most outbreaks occur during September and October. Several years ago, BTV really hit hard, especially on the Maurepas Swamp WMA, which is predominantly swamp habitat. Prolonged high water conditions concentrated deer on small ridges and canal banks for over a month. As a result, very crowded conditions existed during the height of the infection period. We had numerous reports of small groups of deer found dead on these higher areas.

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HABITAT

How Did the Deer and the Habitat Fare After The Hurricanes?

By Emile P. LeBlanc, DMAP Coordinator

You're probably tired of hearing about all the devastation that both Hurricanes Katrina and Rita dealt the lower portions of the state last fall. Because I flew and drove from east to west and back again several times, I can say that I have never seen such destruction and devastation in my short 52 years. Being born and raised in Donaldsonville, I remember storms like Hilda, Betsy and especially the damage dealt by Camille to the Mississippi coast in 1969. Hurricane Andrew dealt a heavy blow to the central coastal area as well as the Atchafalaya Basin in 1992. However, these two most recent storms had a tag-team effect on the entire Louisiana, Mississippi and a significant portion of the Texas coastlines.

Debris Line Created by Hurricane Rita

Shortly after Rita, I was assigned to fly the

southwestern coast from New Iberia to the Texas coast collecting salinity readings. What I found on that trip was fresh to brackish marshes that had salinity readings approaching those of seawater. I also observed 4 dead "belly up" alligators along this flight, several dead deer, many dead cows and a debris line that ran for miles. The habitat looked terrible! Later, we got reports of deer concentrated on higher ground near the roadways. Night surveys by department biologists spotted several deer but no large groups of deer were observed. Subsequent field investigations confirmed that **significant** numbers of deer and alligators **survived** and habitat was on the mend.

A large portion of lower St. Mary and Terrebonne Parishes had high winds and water. A mid-October airboat survey of the regions found that the habitat was on the mend. The high water had actually done some good by clearing lilly-choked ponds, ditches and bayous. This area was affected minimally and recovering quickly. Stomach content analysis from this area during the hunting season confirmed that deer were browsing alligator weed and willow, which were recovering the quickest.

Although vegetation in St. Bernard and Plaquemines Parishes were severely salt-burned, a December spotlight survey recorded a **significant** number of deer on the east side of the Mississippi River. The west side of the River in lower Plaquemines Parish offered little deer habitat before the storm and less after it. Nonetheless, we still spotted three deer. In early February, a group of biologists, including myself, spent 2 days surveying the Pass-A-Loutre WMA, which is located at the very mouth of the Mississippi River. This area absorbed the full brunt of Katrina. While the Area Supervisor from the mid-1980s through mid-1990s, I had established a post-deer season spotlight survey to assess the herd. We ran the same 40-mile route by airboat to see how many deer might have survived. On previous surveys, we had tallied from 35–45 deer during this 3½-hour survey. I was hoping to be able to see 10 deer. To my amazement, we counted 45 deer that night. This tied my highest recorded count from back in 1993!

An assessment of the habitat showed that the storm surge had pushed over trees, washed away valuable marsh, deposited debris on levees and swept ridges clean. However, deer were in good shape and browse was coming back strong. With the levee tops cleared, the stage is set for a deer browse explosion this spring and summer. We even found rabbit sign on the higher levees. A camera survey conducted along with the night count confirmed that other animals such as raccoons, coyote and hogs had survived the worst storm to hit this area in more than 35 years.

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DEER BROWSE

"Indicator Species" Highlight: "Greenbrier" or *Smilax spp.*

By: Emile P. LeBlanc, DMAP Coordinator

Department biologists use several tools to determine how deer are interacting with the habitat. When a club enrolls in DMAP, a biologist meets with the landowner/leasee and conducts a browse survey to determine the extent of browsing and the quality of their habitat.

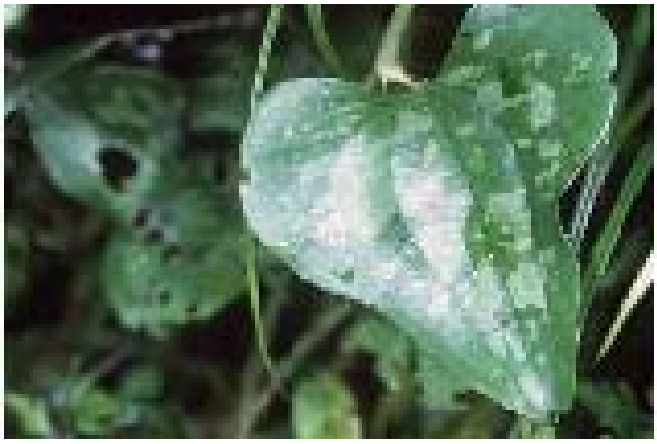
Most deer hunters are aware of the importance of hard mast to deer. The problem with acorns is that they can't be depended upon every year to produce what the herd needs. One year you may have a bumper crop and the next you may have nothing. Herbaceous and woody plants are the mainstay of the deer diet. The browse survey measures the abundance of these forages and their use by deer. To be of value, food must not only be present, but also available. Otherwise, it is of no use to deer. Some overbrowsed areas exhibit a distinct line of vegetation beginning well above the ground, similar to a high water mark. This is caused by deer having to stand on their hind legs to get something to eat. In this situation, it is pretty obvious that there are many more deer than the habitat can support.

I would like to highlight some of the most important natural browse species found around the state. The next time that you are out in the woods,

spend some time looking for these species. This may give you a better idea about what the deer on your property are doing. For those who are really interested in knowing what deer eat across the state, David Moreland's latest publication, *Checklist of Woody & Herbaceous Deer Food Plants of Louisiana* is available for purchase from our department library on Quail Drive in Baton Rouge.

Common Greenbrier

Redberry Greenbrier



Fiddle Leaf Greenbrier

What most people know as "greenbrier" is one of several species of the genus *Smilax*. They are green-stemmed climbing vines armed with stout prickles that grab at your clothes and can produce some painful scratches. This vine can take relatively heavy browsing from deer and still come back in the springtime. My experience with greenbrier has been that if there are deer in the area, most greenbrier leaves and stems will show signs of browsing. I have seen greenbrier eaten to only green stems a foot long or so. The fruit is usually a berry of blue or black color, but there is a species that sports bright red berries and stands out in the fall woods. What is also noticeable about these vines is the thick, shiny, waxy appearance of the leaves and three prominent veins on the back of each leaf.

When I visit a club to run a browse survey, I require a person with a good working knowledge of the property to accompany me so I can survey all habitat types. This usually ends up being one of the club's better hunters. Most times these people really enjoy seeing first hand what plants other than acorns and planted foods the deer on their property eat. Next time you're out looking for deer sign, don't overlook some of the more subtle signs waiting to be discovered.

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PEOPLE

Region 1 Biologist Richard McMullin Retires

Nolan Richard McMullin, better known as Richard, attended Bossier Parish Community College and Louisiana Tech University where he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Wildlife Conservation from LA Tech in 1971.

He was hired by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries in September 1970 as a student worker. He worked primarily on Bodcau and Soda Lake WMAs, performing duties such as waterfowl trapping and banding, hunter bag checks, greentree reservoir management and maintenance work. Richard ventured off for a while to work in the construction trade (just a little more than one year) but was drawn back to

working in his chosen field of study and avocation - managing Louisiana's wildlife and working with its sportsmen. Richard returned to the department for a wildlife biologist position in December 1972. He worked primarily on Loggy Bayou WMA before moving to Bodcau WMA where after 33 years of dedication Richard retired March 10th.

While his work centered around the wildlife and timber management on Bodcau WMA, Richard also worked on LDWF programs such as DMAP, LADT, CWD/deer heard health monitoring, turkey trapping and restocking, monitoring hunting on the WMAs and numerous other duties. When asked to take on a new duty or handle a problem Richard always had one answer, "I'll take care of it." In fact, since his official retirement, Richard continues to "take care of it" by volunteering to help with numerous jobs that he routinely handled for the past 33 years.

Richard was fortunate to work in the part of the state where he was born and raised--Bossier Parish. In addition to a degree in wildlife management, Richard brought to the department a lifetime of curiosity and knowledge that can only be gathered from spending literally thousands of hours in the field. Richard is known for his expertise that covers a wide range of topics from trapping to plant identification to animal tracking and biology to hunting to taxidermy to fishing to farming. He also is known for his expertise on edible wild plants and cooking. Richard has served as "the Chef" at the wildlife tasting booth for over two decades at the National Hunting and Fishing Day activities on Bodcau WMA.

Bragging about knowing Richard comes easy as everyone who has had the pleasure to spend just a few minutes with him in the outdoors knows. Most everyone has known someone that may be well versed in the details of wildlife research work, field work or wildlife life history. It is rare to meet someone like Richard who can blend all of his book knowledge and experience and explain it in a manner that is understandable to anyone whether they are three years old or 103. Maybe it's his way of just making it all fun, which is one of the main reasons we all hunt and fish and venture into the outdoors

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Meetings of Interest:

White-tailed Deer Field Day-Shriever, LA

About 85 persons attended the white-tailed deer field day was held at Rebecca Plantation in Shriever, Louisiana on April 25th. The LSU AgCenter in Houma coordinated it. Demonstrations included food plot management (Dr. Don Reed, LSU Cooperative Extension), deer browse evaluation (LDWF Deer Study Leader, Scott Durham) and deer necropsy (LDWF Biologists Tony Vidrine and Emile P. LeBlanc. Another field day in that region is tentatively planned to be held by next March. Comments and information requests can be directed to Mr. Barton Joffrion (Parish Chairman LSU AgCenter) or Mr. David Bourgeios (Sea Grant Associate Area Agent, LSU Ag Center) at (985) 873-6495.

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WEATHER REPORT

Hunting Season Overview

By Emile P. LeBlanc, DMAP Coordinator

Week	Average (State Temp.)	Departure (From Normal)	Remarks
Sep. 26-	80	7	Well Above
Oct. 2			Normal, Dry
Oct. 3-	75	4	Above Normal
Oct. 9			
Oct. 10-	70	2	Near Normal
Oct. 16			Very Dry
Oct. 17-	69	3	Above Normal
Oct. 23			
Oct. 24-	N/A		
Oct. 30			
Oct. 31-	64	2	Near Normal
Nov. 6			But Still Dry
Nov. 7-	70	10	Well Above
Nov. 13			Normal
Nov. 14-	57	-1	Near Normal
Nov. 20			1st Sign. Freeze
Nov. 21-	57	1	Near Normal
Nov. 27			A Little Rain
Nov. 28-	56	2	Near Normal
Dec. 4			Drying Up…
Dec. 5-	44	-9	Well Below Nor.
Dec. 11			Winter Arrives
Dec. 12-	48	-3	Below Normal
Dec. 18			Rain Arrives Too
Dec. 19-	46	-4	Below Normal
Dec. 25			Rain Slacks
Dec. 26-	57	8	Well Above
Jan. 1			Normal
Jan. 2-	56	7	Well Above
Jan. 8			Normal; No Rain
Jan. 9-	56	7	Well Above
~~Jan. 15~~			~~Normal; Rain~~
Jan. 16-	55	6	Well Above
Jan. 22			Normal; Rain
Jan. 23-	53	3	Above Normal
Jan. 29			More Rain
Jan. 30-	55	4	Above Normal
Feb. 5			More Rain
Feb. 6-	47	-5	Well Below
Feb. 12			Normal
Feb. 13-	50	-3	Below Normal
Feb. 19			

Summary

Well Above Normal:	6 of 20 (30%)
Above Normal:	4 of 20 (20%)
Near Normal:	5 of 20 (25%)
Below Normal:	3 of 20 (15%)
Well Below Normal:	2 of 20 (10%)

The early archery season started off with very warm, dry conditions. In fact, even the hurricanes didn't produce the quantities of rain usually associated with these storms. The next 4 weeks alternated between above normal and near normal temperatures, but remained dry. The 2nd week of November was well above normal, but the rest of the month was near normal. December 5 – December 25 proved to be cooler than normal with temperatures averaging from the middle to upper 40s--good hunting weather! The next month rebounded with very warm conditions ranging from 6-8 degrees above normal then slowly becoming cooler through the remainder of the deer season.

Precipitation was below normal through most of the hunting season except for 1 week in the middle of December. While most serious deer hunters will hunt regardless of precipitation chances, especially during the rut, the dry conditions should have encouraged all hunters to get out and hunt.

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Support Operation Game Thief

Report Wildlife Violations—800-442-2511

NON-GAME WILDLIFE

Ivory-billed Woodpecker Searches in Louisiana

By Eric Baka, Non-Game Biologist

The February 2004 rediscovery of the ivory-billed woodpecker (*Campephilus principalis*) (IBWO) at the Cache River National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) in Arkansas has astonished and intrigued biologists and lay-people alike. The additional sightings at Cache River NWR over the past 2 years have spurred new interest in investigating the potential presence of the IBWO in Louisiana.

In 1999 the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF), Louisiana State University (LSU) and Zeiss Optics sponsored an IBWO search in the Pearl River Basin after an LSU student sighted what was believed to be an IBWO. Those search efforts did not confirm the presence of the IBWO and interest in conducting IBWO searches waned. After the 2004 rediscovery of the IBWO, LDWF started receiving many calls of potential IBWO sightings in the Pearl and Atchafalaya River Basins. LDWF biologists began investigating all credible sightings and discovered the difficulties associated with detecting a cryptic species in large areas that were hard to access (i.e. bottomland hardwood swamps).

LDWF biologists were interested in employing a comprehensive search strategy for the IBWO. In January 2006 LDWF received a grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to conduct an IBWO search at the Pearl River Wildlife Management Area (WMA). A novel idea was proposed to use 4 ultra-light aircraft from the Operation Migration whooping crane (*Grus americana*) repatriation project to fly line transects over the entire WMA. The ultra-lights fly at low altitude and moderate speed allowing each pilot to have an excellent view of the forest below. A video camera was attached the pilot's helmet and recorded the flights. LDWF had a ground response team of 2 biologists ready to investigate any potential IBWOs that the pilots observed.

James T. Tanner/Courtesy of Nancy Tanner

Unfortunately, no IBWOs were encountered during the 2-week search at Pearl River WMA. High winds and fog hampered the search efforts by limiting the number of ultra-light flights. Very clear pictures of the forest below as well as some other woodpecker species (mainly pileated woodpeckers [*Dryocopus pileatus*]) were captured during flights. LDWF biologists were able to confirm that this methodology of searching for the IBWO is basically sound. We hope to conduct similar searches next winter when the IBWO are most likely to be nesting and visibility is at its best.

The department is still interested in all potential IBWO sightings and the group most likely to encounter the IBWO would be deer hunters. With the amount of time deer hunters spend hunting and scouting, it is likely that someone may catch a glimpse of an IBWO. The rediscovery of this species in Arkansas has even the most seasoned bird biologist taking a second hard look at every pileated woodpecker they see. To report a potential IBWO sighting in Louisiana please

contact Eric Baka, Non-game Biologist at (225) 765-2359 or via email at ebaka@wlf.louisiana.gov. More information regarding the IBWO can be found at this USFWS website: http://www.fws.gov/ivorybill/.

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- **NOTE: Please Make Copies of this Document and Make it Available to All Members of Your Club.**
- **It can also be found on our web site at (www.wlf.louisiana.gov)**

The DMAP Newsletter is printed twice a year to assist DMAP Cooperators with the intensive management of deer and habitat resources and to enhance the recreational enjoyment derived from these resources. It also updates cooperators with information on the administration of the program. **DMAP contact people who receive the newsletter directly are encouraged to pass it to as many of their members as possible.** Please forward any questions or comments about DMAP or the DMAP Newsletter to:

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